



River Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Clerk: Anthony Laing Administrator: Valerie Wardlaw
 Fisheries Office, Logie Steading, Dunphail, Forres, IV36 2QN
 07501 767801 admin@fnlrt.org.uk www.fnlrt.org.uk/river-findhorn

Minute of the Board Meeting Held on Monday 23rd May 2022 at 10.30am at the Long Room, Logie Steading.

Present:

Anthony Laing -AnL (Chairman)
 David Paton – DP

Murray Wilson – MW
 Graham Bell- GB

In attendance:

Sean McLean (SM) (Head Bailiff),
 Alister Taylor (AT) (Bailiff)

Robert Laughton (RL) – Director, FNLRT

| A | Item | Action |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | <p>Apologies: Tony Watts, Mark Laing, Alisdair Laing, Alex Leven, Andrew Howard, Valerie Wardlaw</p> <p>AnL welcomed David Paton (DP) and Murray Wilson (MW) to their first Board meeting and looked forward to their contributions particularly with respect to the upper river.</p> <p>Additional Board membership was discussed, and it was agreed that a representative from the Findhorn Angling Club should be invited to join the Board. AnL and VW to contact the Association and invite a representative.</p> <p>RL informed the meeting that Valerie Wardlaw (Administrator) had sadly decided to leave the Trust. Advertisements for a replacement would be posted shortly with a transfer of duties to the successful applicant anticipated in early July. AnL recorded thanks to Valerie for all her hard work over the last nine years.</p> | AnL/VW |
| 2. | <p>Minutes of Meeting 15th November 2021 Minutes were approved.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Matters arising Sawbill What's App group- SM/AT to set up a What's App group for keepers/anglers etc to notify ad hoc sightings of sawbills on the river.</p> | SM/AT |
| 4. | <p>Budget & Finance Annual accounts for 2021 had been circulated and were approved. Cash flow was reviewed and largely on target although the increasing fuel costs were noted and may affect budgeting.</p> | |
| 5. | <p>River Matters Conservation Code 2022- The wording of the code was discussed after concerns on clarity had been raised by some proprietors and anglers. This referred to ambiguity between whether the code applied to both salmon and or sea trout in certain sections. Local byelaws and fishing approaches was also discussed and RL/SM/AnL agreed to reword the code in the specific sections and present revised version for approval at the next meeting. H&S- RL advised the Board that First Aid training was still required and would be organised this year the Bailiffs as their current certification has expired.</p> | <p>RL/AnL</p> <p>SM/AT /RL</p> |

| | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Head Bailiff Report 2021 2 Spring catch returns- SM had received returns from proprietors and to date 150 spring salmon had been caught and returned. Three over 20lbs were reported. Encouraging numbers of sea trout and finnock had been noted in the Bay.</p> <p>The bailiffs had received reports of salmon with fungal infections during late April and early May. Many fish were in very poor condition and subsequently died. Estimated losses were around 300-400 salmon although it was difficult to get an accurate figure. Logie, the lower Divie, were badly affected but reports came in from the full length of the river. With Bob (FNLRT) five infected salmon were collected from the pool below the falls on the lower Divie and retained alive for sampling by the Marine Scotland Fish Inspectors. The fish were full sampled, and we await a report. We are grateful to Ewen Manson (Logie) for his help in capturing the fish.</p> <p>A range of poaching incidents have also been dealt with mostly anglers fishing without tickets with a few more serious ones reported to the Police Scotland wildlife crime officer, the latter include a group of youths from Burghead who have been persistently fishing without permission both here and on other neighbouring rivers and have been behaving in an aggressive manner, a court order banning them from the river is being pursued.</p> <p>We continue to report any poaching related information to Police Scotland through the non-emergency 101 line, which helps the police build up a picture of incidents in the area.</p> <p>AT has organised sawbill duck counts and three were completed with considerable help from keepers and other volunteer helpers. Data has been compiled by RL for a licence application.</p> <p>The bailiffs and RL with a fish rescue on the Freeburn (Allt na Frithe) in Tomatin. Electrofishing was used to collect fish from the area of river works and the small number of fish were transferred to a safe location. Very few fish were caught, and the water temperature of the burn was much higher than normal. We measured the water temp and found it was 19.5°C while above the distillery its was lower at 13.0°C and in the neighbouring Allt Neacrath burn it was 12.5°C. The elevated temperatures reflected the cooling water discharged from Tomatin distillery. SM had further discussions with the distillery and also reported the matter to Andrew Steel (SEPA). The elevated temperatures in the Freeburn are likely to affect the survival of salmonids within the burn and we will pursue this further with the distillers and SEPA.</p> | |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>FNLRT Director Report Fish Disease- RL provide additional information on salmon fungal infections. Five adult salmon had been sampled fully by the MS Fish Inspectors and a report would be available in a few weeks. RL sampled an additional 20 dead salmon to collect basic data on length, weight, sex and condition. Where the sex could be identified 14 were female and 6 were</p> | |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>male indicating a high proportion of females in the spring population and a considerable loss of eggs to the river.</p> <p>The long dry spring with low flows may have contributed to the outbreak with salmon accumulating in the pools. Higher water temperatures can also be a factor but this year water temperatures were fairly normal. Inspection of the dead fish indicated a couple of fish showing red vent syndrome and also red skin disease.</p> <p>Reports of further fish deaths were still filtering although not in high numbers. Information for anglers and proprietors would be updated on the web and RL would continue to sample any dead fish. Further live fish may also be captured for the Fish Inspectors if an opportunity arises.</p> <p>Riparian woodland development- Fishmongers Company funded a project at the beginning of the year to identify key areas where rising water temperatures will impact on salmon survival. The Upper Findhorn Catchment was identified as a critical area for planting riparian woodland to provide shading to reduce water temperatures, in addition to increasing habitat biodiversity. Glenmazeran Estate has been approached to develop a tree planting project, but further discussions are needed to identify potential sources of funding and confirm the scale of the project.</p> <p>RL has secured further funding from the Fishmongers Company to discuss the potential for improving the riparian woodlands in the upper Findhorn and will be progressing this in July with other areas such as Kyllachy, Coignafearn and Dalmigavie.</p> <p>AST Smolt tagging project- No smolt tagging was conducted on the Findhorn in 2022 and RL was contracted by the Spey Fishery Board to assist with tagging on the Tromie and Truim. The results will help contribute to our information on smolt losses from upper areas within rivers. Further work on collecting scats from sawbills to analyse diet is continuing and the heads from the diseased salmon were collected for analysis into marine growth.</p> <p>Predation- Sawbills count data has been analysed and a licence application completed.</p> <p>Seals Along with many other rivers a length seal licence application was completed and submitted. However, only one river received a successful licence all others were rejected. We are considering an appeal with the other rivers led assisted by Fisheries Management Scotland.</p> <p>INNS- SISI project to continue to March 2023 with the emphasis on developing a policy for continued control thereafter. Planning for GH control is underway with the Muckle Burn and Mundole areas already completed. Mink are still being seen along the coast and proving difficult to catch! So far no sightings on the Findhorn this year.</p> | |
| 8. | <p>Catchment Developments</p> <p><i>A96 Dualling-</i> Plans appear to be suspended with a review being carried out by consultants Jacobs.</p> <p><i>Muckle Burn:</i> SEPA still pursuing work at Achvraad and Bantrach Bridge. Repairs proposed to railway bridge at Brodie, comments supplied and fish rescue likely. Several have trees fallen into the burn during storms and these were inspected by bailiffs with advice provided.</p> <p><i>Freeburn Tomatin:</i> fish rescue complete and high temps observed, see report above.</p> | |

| | | |
|----|--|------------|
| | <p><i>A9 Dualling:</i> Contract for works likely to be issued later this year.</p> <p><i>Dalmagarry Burn:</i> Repairs to rail bridge required, site meeting was completed, and repairs were discussed with contractors. Works due for August and fish rescue likely.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>AOCB</p> <p>Highland Council had enquired if the Findhorn Board wished to have the river revalued. After discussion AnL/VW should enquire further for clarification.</p> | AnL |
| 10 | <p>Dates of 2022 Meetings</p> <p>August 8th Board Meeting followed by AGM at Coignafearn.</p> <p>November 14th 10.30am Board Meeting.</p> | |
| | | |